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TERRORISM AND THE WORLD PRESS

ANNCR: NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN EXAMINES A DILEMMA FACING MANY NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS AND EDITORS AROUND THE WORLD.

VOICE: ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF LAST WEEK'S INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION MEETING IN WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA, WAS A PANEL DISCUSSION ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE WORLD PRESS IN DEALING WITH A PHENOMENON OF OUR TIMES -- POLITICAL TERRORISM. HOW SERIOUS THAT ISSUE IS WAS UNDERLINED BY A CIRCUMSTANCE NOT WITHOUT IRONY-- THE ABSENCE OF THE ORIGINALLY-SCHEDULED MODERATOR OF THE PANEL. HE IS RAUL KRAISELBURD, PUBLISHER AND EDITOR OF THE ARGENTINE DAILY EL DIA, OF LA PLATA. MISTER KRAISELBURD WAS UNABLE TO ATTEND THE I.A.P.A. MEETING THIS YEAR BECAUSE OF A DEEPLY PERSONAL PROBLEM DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE PANELS THEME. HIS FOUR YEAR OLD SON WAS KIDNAPPED EARLY LAST MONTH BY ARGENTINE TERRORISTS WHO DEMANDED THAT MISTER KRAISELBURD CEASE HIS NEWSPAPER'S ATTACKS ON THEIR ACTIVITIES. DURING THE DISCUSSION THE OTHER PANELISTS TOOK NOTE OF MISTER KRAISELBURD'S ABSENCE AND THE REASONS FOR IT. ONE OF THE PANEL MEMBERS WAS AN AMERICAN EXPERT ON THE SUBJECT, PROFESSOR BONYER BELL OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. ANOTHER WAS A HIGH OFFICIAL OF THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, JAMES INGRAM, WHOSE JOB AS ASSISTANT DEPUTY DIRECTOR IS TO SUPERVISE FEDERAL, ANTI-TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN THIS COUNTRY. AND THE THIRD PANEL MEMBER IS ONE OF LATIN AMERICA'S MOST RESPECTED JOURNALISTS--OSCAR YANES, OF VENEZUELA'S NEWSPAPER SYNDICATE, BLOQUE DEARMAS.

MISTER YANES SAID THAT INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM FACES THE WORLD PRESS WITH A DELICATE DILEMMA. THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM LIES IN THE JOURNALISTIC OBLIGATION TO REPORT THE NEWS--GOOD AND BAD--AS ACCURATELY AND COMPLETELY AS POSSIBLE. IN FULFILLING

THAT OBLIGATION, OF COURSE, JOURNALISTS MUST INFORM READERS, LISTENERS AND VIEWERS--ABOUT TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. BUT MISTER YANES ADDED, AND THE OTHER PANEL MEMBERS SUPPORTED HIM, THAT IN ALL REPORTING OF TERRORIST ACTIVITIES THE PRESS IS EQUALLY UNDER OBLIGATION TO PLACE THOSE ACTIVITIES IN FOCUS.

PANEL MEMBERS SAID IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO REPORT A KIDNAPPING BY URBAN GUERRILLAS OR A HIJACKING OF AN AIRLINER BY POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED TERRORISTS. THE JOB THE PRESS MUST DO IF IT IS TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM IS TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE TRUE NATURE OF SUCH ACTS OF VIOLENCE--THE SUFFERING IT CAUSES TO ITS VICTIMS AND THEIR RELATIVES. THE CONSENSUS OF THE PANEL WAS THAT UNTIL THE WORLD PRESS CAN HELP ENLIST THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMON CITIZEN FOR GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO COMBAT TERRORISM, INTERNATIONAL CRIME WILL CONTINUE TO CLAIM INNOCENT VICTIMS, UNDERMINE THE PRESTIGE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNMENTS AND GENERALLY UPSET RELATIONS BETWEEN THEM AND THEIR NEIGHBORS. BY THE SAME TOKEN, SAID THE PANELISTS, GOVERNMENTS HAVE A SOLEMN OBLIGATION TO COOPERATE CLOSELY WITH THE WORLD PRESS IN ITS JOB OF RECRUITING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ANTI-TERRORIST MEASURES IN SUCH BODIES AS THE UNITED NATIONS AND ITS VARIOUS REGIONAL BODIES.

BUT, AS THE WILLIAMSBURG PANEL MADE CLEAR, IF THE GOVERNMENTS AND PRESS ARE TO SUCCESSFULLY COMBAT TERRORISM, THEY MUST HAVE THE FULL BACKING OF THEIR PEOPLE. AND THAT IS THE MESSAGE THAT THE EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE PRESS HAVE TAKEN BACK TO THEIR COUNTRIES. ON HOW WELL THEY PRESENT THAT MESSAGE AND HOW WELL THEIR READERS PERCEIVE IT DEPENDS THE OUTCOME OF THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TERRORISM, AT LEAST IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD.

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